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EDITORIAL POLICY

WE venture to affirm that *PMLA* should reflect the most distinguished American scholarship in modern languages and literatures. In our opinion it should not be a place for beginners to try their wings, unless those wings are used for sure and significant flight; and it should not be a place for established scholars to publish their incidental efforts, unless those efforts compare in excellence and value with the efforts of younger men. As the official Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, *PMLA* should publish to the learned world the most important work of members of the Association—that, and nothing less.

We affirm, moreover, that the distribution of papers in *PMLA* should reflect work of distinction actually being done from year to year, regardless of periods or languages. Thus, when literary or philological research in Spanish is at a low ebb, and research in German is flourishing, we should print many articles in German and (however regretfully) few in Spanish. When only a handful of scholars are producing really distinguished studies in American literature, and many are producing such studies in Old English, we should print many articles on the older period and (however regretfully) few on the modern. Members who feel their interests neglected by this policy can always alter the situation by writing, and by encouraging others to write, articles good enough to be published. *PMLA* should reveal the best American scholarship as it is—not as it was, not as it theoretically should be. Equal representation is a tax on excellence.

We affirm that *PMLA* exists to encourage the advancement of literary and linguistic learning on the widest possible front. It welcomes new approaches to literary or linguistic study which are based upon sound scholarship, and it disavows any exclusive preference for conventional methods or for traditional papers on traditional subjects. Explicitly it invites important articles dealing with critical theory, the history of ideas, analytical bibliography, and American civilization, provided only that these articles have literary relevance.

While *PMLA* wishes to introduce to the Association new scholars and new lines of inquiry, it is reluctant to publish minor articles or highly technical studies which are more suitable for other journals. The editors also seek to discourage either brief notes (the staple of several other periodicals) or unduly long papers (unless these are unusually important).

Although *PMLA* is not a journal of *belles lettres*, and publishes nothing addressed to a wider audience than the Association represents, it insists that articles on literary or philological subjects should be written in a clear and readable style. This criterion should not be construed as an encouragement of florid or expansive writing. Space is at a premium. Documentation should be held to a necessary minimum (and footnotes are preferably typed, with double spacing, on pages following the text). The *MLA Style Sheet*, giving full instructions on the preparation of scholarly articles, will be published in the April *PMLA*. Younger authors are advised to read also the advice of R. B. McKerrow and H. M. Silver on the publication of research, published in the April 1950 issue.

Every member of the Association has the privilege, denied to non-members, of submitting papers for publication in *PMLA*. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Editor of *PMLA*, 100 Washington Square East, New York 3, N. Y. Stamps need not be enclosed. Every paper submitted will be read by at least one consultant with special competence in the field of study, and by at least one member of the Editorial Committee. Rejected papers will be returned within about two months, usually with constructive criticisms, sometimes with suggestions that they be submitted elsewhere. Acceptance of papers may be conditional upon their revision in the light of specific criticisms. Papers can usually be published within nine months of acceptance.

Members of the Association are asked to consider not only the advantages of these services, but also the fact that these services are made possible by the unpaid labors of many distinguished men and women who generously contribute their scant leisure to the advancement of scholarship in America.

THE EDITOR
(for the Editorial Committee)

TOWARD A THEORY OF ROMANTICISM

BY MORSE PECKHAM

CAN WE HOPE for a theory of romanticism? The answer, I believe, is, Yes. But before proceeding further, I must make quite clear what it is that I propose to discuss.

First, although the word "romanticism" refers to any number of things, it has two primary referents: (1) a general and permanent characteristic of mind, art, and personality, found in all periods and in all cultures; (2) a specific historical movement in art and ideas which occurred in Europe and America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. I am concerned only with the second of these two meanings. There may be a connection between the two, but I doubt it, and at any rate whatever I have to say refers only to historical romanticism.

Second, in this historical sense "romanticism" as a revolution in art and ideas is often considered to be only an expression of a general re-direction of European life which included also a political revolution, an industrial revolution, and perhaps several others. There may be a connection between the revolution in ideas and the arts and the more or less contemporary revolutions in other fields of human activities, but for the time being, at any rate, I think it is wise to dissociate the romanticism of ideas and art from these other revolutions. Just as one of our greatest difficulties so far has arisen from assuming an identity between general and historical romanticism, so much of our difficulty in considering the nature of historical romanticism has come from assuming its identity with all of the other more or less contemporary revolutions. Let us first isolate the historical romanticism of ideas and arts before we beg any questions about the nature of history. For example, I think it is at present wiser to consider romanticism as one of the means then available for hindering or helping the early-nineteenth-century movement for political reform than it is to assume that romanticism and the desire for political reform and its partial achievement are the same thing.

With these two distinctions in mind, I repeat, Can we hope for a theory of the historical romanticism of ideas and art? Such a theory must be able to submit successfully to two tests. First, it must show that Wordsworth and Byron, Goethe and Chateaubriand, were all part of a general European literary movement which had its correspondencies in the music, the painting, the architecture, the philosophy, the theology, and the science of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Second, it must be able to get us inside individual works of literature, art, and

thought: that is, to tell us not merely that the works are there, to enable us not merely to classify them, but to deliver up to us a key to individual works so that we can penetrate to the principles of their intellectual and aesthetic being. Can we hope for such a theory? *Dare* we hope for such a theory. To this question I answer, "Yes, we can." I feel that we have it almost within our grasp—that one or two steps more and we shall have mastered this highly perplexing literary problem.

Certainly there is no generally accepted theory of romanticism at the present time. Twenty years ago, and for more than twenty years before that, the problem of romanticism was debated passionately, not least because of the redoubtable but utterly misdirected attacks of Babbitt and More. In his *Romanticism and the Modern Ego* (1943) Jacques Barzun has made a good collection of some of the definitions that have been more or less widely used in the past fifty years: a return to the Middle Ages, a love of the exotic, the revolt from Reason, a vindication of the individual, a liberation of the unconscious, a reaction against scientific method, a revival of pantheism, a revival of idealism, a revival of Catholicism, a rejection of artistic conventions, a return to emotionalism, a return to nature—and so on. The utmost confusion reigns in the whole field. In the past fifteen or twenty years, most scholars have done one of two things. Either they have given up hope for any sense to come out of this tangle and have stoutly denied that there was such a movement, or, less pessimistically, they have continued to use one or more concepts or ideas—theories which they feel to be unsatisfactory yet which they continue to employ because there is nothing better. Most students are convinced that something happened to literature between the death of Pope and the death of Coleridge, but not very many are willing, when you question them sharply, to tell you exactly what happened. The situation is all the more discouraging in that it is generally conceded that romanticism is a central problem in literary history, and that if we have failed to solve that problem, we can scarcely hope to solve any general problems in literary history.

Too many scholars, then, will try either to avoid the term entirely, or failing that strategy—and it always fails—will isolate some idea or literary effect and will say, "This is romanticism." Or such a scholar will use the term with the full knowledge that the reader will recognize the difficulties involved and will charitably permit him to beg the question. He will very rarely begin with a theory of romanticism and seek to place a particular poem or author in relation to that theory or seek to use the theory in unlocking a baffling and complex work, or even a simple one for that matter. He will fit his ideas into whatever notion of romanticism he may have, usually without specifying what it might

be, but very rarely, at least in public and in print, will he use a considered theory of romanticism as a starting point for his investigations. It is a discouraging situation, but my purpose is to suggest that it is not so discouraging as it appears.

In the last few years there have been signs that some scholars at least are moving toward a common concept of romanticism. In 1943 Jacques Barzun spoke of romanticism as a biological revolution;¹ and in 1949, he defined it as part of "the great revolution which drew the intellect of Europe . . . from the expectation and desire of fixity into desire and expectation of change."² Stallknecht, in his fascinating book on Wordsworth, *Strange Seas of Thought* (1945), spoke of how romanticism established the sentiment of being in England, and then, reversing his statement, suggested that the sentiment of being established romanticism. In his admirable introduction to his edition of *Sartor Resartus* (1937) C. Frederick Harrold—whose death has deprived us of one of the most valuable of contemporary students of Victorian literature—wrote of Carlyle's ideas about organicism and dynamism. And in his and Templeman's excellent anthology of Victorian prose (1938) there is an appendix "illustrative of nineteenth-century conceptions of growth, development, evolution." But the most recent attempt to tackle the problem, the best yet, though I think not entirely satisfactory, has been René Wellek's two articles, "The Concept of Romanticism," published in 1949 in the first two issues of *Comparative Literature*. There he offered three criteria of romanticism: imagination for the view of poetry, an organic concept of nature for the view of the world, and symbol and myth for poetic style.

Wellek does establish to my mind three things in his article: first, that there *was* a European intellectual and artistic movement with certain intellectual and artistic characteristics, a movement properly known as romanticism; second, that the participators in that movement were quite conscious of their historic and revolutionary significance; and third, that the chief reason for the current skepticism in America about a theory of romanticism was the publication in 1924 of Arthur O. Lovejoy's famous article, "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms."³ In this article Lovejoy pointed out that the term is used in a fearful variety of ways, and that no common concept can include them all. Indeed, the growth of skepticism about any solid conclusions on romanticism does seem to begin—or at least start to become very powerful and eventually domi-

¹ *Romanticism and the Modern Ego* (New York, 1943).

² "Romanticism: Definition of a Period," *Magazine of Art*, XLII (Nov. 1949), 243.

³ *PMLA*, XXXIX, 229–253; republished in his *Essays in the History of Ideas* (Baltimore, 1948).

nant—with the publication of that article. Wellek decries what he calls Lovejoy's excessive nominalism and skepticism, and refuses to be satisfied with it. He also puts in the same category of nominalism and skepticism Lovejoy's 1941 article, "The Meaning of Romanticism for the Historian of Ideas."⁴ Here Lovejoy offered three criteria of romanticism, or rather the three basic ideas of romanticism, "heterogeneous, logically independent, and sometimes essentially antithetic to one another in their implications." These ideas are organicism, dynamism, and diversitarianism. Now in discussing Lovejoy's 1941 paper Wellek has made, I think, an error. He seems to have confused the nature of the two articles, because, apparently, he has forgotten about the last three chapters of *The Great Chain of Being* (1936).⁵

Lovejoy's great book is a landmark of scholarship, and also for scholarship. It is a book on which some of the most useful scholarship of our times has been based, and it is as useful to the teacher who uses it with intelligence as it is to the scholar. Twenty-five years from now, scholars of literature will look back on the publication of *The Great Chain of Being* as a turning point in the development of literary scholarship; for it has been of astonishing value in opening up to our understanding in quite unexpected ways the literature of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. But so far as I know, almost no use has been made of the last three chapters, especially of the last two, in explaining romanticism and romantic works. It is a curious situation; for these chapters contain the foundations for a theory of romanticism which will do everything that such a theory must be able to do—place works and authors in relation to each other and illuminate individual works of art as they ought to be illuminated.

By ignoring (at least in his two papers) *The Great Chain of Being*, Wellek concluded that the same kind of skepticism was present in both Lovejoy's 1924 and 1941 articles. Actually *The Great Chain of Being* is an answer to Lovejoy's 1924 article. Without emphasizing the fact, Lovejoy *did* in 1933 and 1934, when he delivered the lectures on which the book is based, what in 1924 he said could not be done. To be brief, in 1936 he stated simply that literary romanticism was the manifestation of a change in the way of thinking of European man, that since Plato

⁴ *JHI*, II, 237–278.

⁵ Wellek's confusion, or apparent confusion, lies in his implication that the "Romanticisms" Lovejoy discussed in 1924 are the same as the "romantic ideas" which in 1941 he called "heterogeneous, logically independent, and sometimes essentially antithetic to one another in their implications." As I read the 1941 article, I interpret the latter as these three: organicism, dynamism, and diversitarianism. (See below, Section II of this paper.) These are not the "Romanticisms" of 1924. (See the first paragraph of Wellek's article, "The Concept of 'Romanticism' in Literary History," *CL*, I, 1.)

European man had been thinking according to one system of thought—based on the attempted reconciliation of two profoundly different ideas about the nature of reality, both stemming from Plato—and that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries occidental thought took an entirely different direction, as did occidental art. Furthermore, he says that the change in the way the mind works was the most profound change in the history of occidental thinking, and by implication it involved a similar profound change in the methods and objects of European art.

I

What I wish to do in the rest of this paper is, first, to explain what these new ideas of the late eighteenth century involved, to reconcile Wellek and Lovejoy, and Lovejoy with himself, and to show the relevance of certain other ideas about romanticism I have mentioned; and second, to make one addition to the theories of Lovejoy and Wellek, an addition which I hope goes far toward clearing up an essential problem which Lovejoy scarcely faced and with which Wellek is unable to come to terms.

It is scarcely necessary in this journal to outline what *The Great Chain of Being* implied. Yet I should like to reduce the concepts involved to what I think to be their essentials. Briefly the shift in European thought was a shift from conceiving the cosmos as a static mechanism to conceiving it as a dynamic organism: static—in that all the possibilities of reality were realized from the beginning of things or were implicit from the beginning, and that these possibilities were arranged in a complete series, a hierarchy from God down to nothingness—including the literary possibilities from epic to Horatian ode, or lyric; a mechanism—in that the universe is a perfectly running machine, a watch usually. (A machine is the most common metaphor of this metaphysic.) Almost as important as these concepts was that of uniformitarianism, implicit both in staticism and in mechanism, whenever these two are separated, as frequently happens. That is, everything that change produces was to be conceived as a part to fit into the already perfectly running machine; for all things conformed to ideal patterns in the mind of God or in the non-material ground of phenomena.

If, in short, you conceive of the universe as a perfectly ordered machine, you will assume that any imperfections you may notice are really things you do not understand. You will think of everything in the universe as fitting perfectly into that machine. You will think that immutable laws govern the formation of every new part of that machine to ensure that it fits the machine's requirements. And, although with delightful inconsistency—as Pope made his *Essay on Man* the basis of

his satires⁶—you will judge the success of any individual thing according to its ability to fit into the workings of the machine, your inconsistency will be concealed, for a time, by the influence of either original sin, if you are an orthodox Christian, or of the corruptions of civilization, if you are a deist or a sentimentalist—not that there is much difference. Your values will be perfection, changelessness, uniformity, rationalism.

Now this mighty static metaphysic which had governed perilously the thoughts of men since the time of Plato, collapsed of its own internal inconsistencies in the late eighteenth century—or collapsed for some people. For most people it still remains the unrealized base for most of their values, intellectual, moral, social, aesthetic, and religious. But to the finer minds of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was no longer tenable. There are a number of reasons why this should have been so. The principal cause was that all its implications had been worked out; they stood forth in all their naked inconsistency. It became impossible to accept a theodicy based upon it. More and more, thinkers began searching for a new system of explaining the nature of reality and the duties of men.

I shall omit the development of the new idea. The grand outlines have been magnificently sketched by Lovejoy, and the details are steadily being filled in. Rather, I shall present the new idea in its most radical form. Let us begin with the new metaphor. The new metaphor is not a machine; it is an organism. It is a tree, for example; and a tree is a good example, for a study of nineteenth-century literature reveals the continual recurrence of that image. Hence the new thought is organicism. Now the first quality of an organism is that it is not something made, it is something *being* made or growing. We have a philosophy of becoming, not a philosophy of being. Furthermore, the relation of its component parts is not that of the parts of a machine which have been made separately, i.e., separate entities in the mind of the deity, but the relation of leaves to stem to trunk to root to earth. Entities are an organic part of that which produced them. The existence of each part is made possible only by the existence of every other part. Relationships, not entities, are the object of contemplation and study.

Moreover, an organism has the quality of life. It does not develop additively; it grows organically. The universe is alive. It is not something made, a perfect machine; it grows. Therefore change becomes a positive value, not a negative value; change is not man's punishment, it is his opportunity. Anything that continues to grow, or change quali-

⁶ See n. 12, below.

tatively, is not perfect, can, perhaps, never be perfect. Perfection ceases to be a positive value. Imperfection becomes a positive value. Since the universe is changing and growing, there is consequently a positive and radical intrusion of novelty into the world. That is, with the intrusion of each novelty, the fundamental character of the universe itself changes. We have a universe of emergents. If all these things be true, it therefore follows that there are no pre-existent patterns. Every work of art, for instance, creates a new pattern; each one has its own aesthetic law. It may have resemblances even in principle to previous works of art, but fundamentally it is unique. Hence come two derivative ideas. First, diversitarianism, not uniformitarianism, becomes the principle of both creation and criticism. The romantics, for example, have been accused of confusing the genres of poetry. Why shouldn't they? The whole metaphysical foundation of the genres had been abandoned, or for some authors had simply disappeared. The second derivative is the idea of creative originality. True, the idea of originality had existed before, but in a different sense. Now the artist is original because he is the instrument whereby a genuine novelty, an emergent, is introduced into the world, not because he has come with the aid of genius a little closer to previously existent pattern, natural and divine.

In its radical form, dynamic organicism results in the idea that the history of the universe is the history of God creating himself. Evil is at last accounted for, since the history of the universe—God being imperfect to begin with—is the history of God, whether transcendent or immanent, ridding himself, by the evolutionary process, of evil. Of course, from both the old and the new philosophy, God could be omitted. Either can become a materialism.

In a metaphysical nutshell, the older philosophy grounded itself on the principle that nothing can come from nothing. The newer philosophy grounded itself on the principle that something *can* come from nothing, that an excess can come from a deficiency, that nothing succeeds like excess.

II

I have presented these ideas in a radical form to make them as clear as I can and to bring out in the strongest possible colors the contrast between the old and new methods of thought. Now I should like to apply them to Lovejoy and Wellek. Lovejoy stated that the three new ideas of romantic thought and art were organicism, dynamism, and diversitarianism. He says that they are three separate and inconsistent ideas. I agree that they often appear separately, but I am convinced

that they are all related to and derived from a basic or root-metaphor, the organic metaphor of the structure of the universe.⁷ Strictly speaking, organicism includes dynamism, for an organism must grow or change qualitatively, but I prefer to use the term "dynamic organicism" in order to emphasize the importance of imperfection and change. Diversitarianism, of course, is in these terms a positive value; for the diversity of things and their uniqueness is the proof of the constant intrusion of novelty in the past, the present, and the future.

Turning to Wellek and his three criteria, I have already included one, organicism; the other two are imagination and symbolism. Wellek means the creative imagination, and a little thought will show that the idea of the creative imagination is derived from dynamic organicism. If the universe is constantly in the process of creating itself, the mind of man, his imaginative power, is radically creative. The artist is that man with the power of bringing new artistic concepts into reality, just as the philosopher brings new ideas into reality. And the greatest man is the philosopher-poet, who supremely gifted simultaneously does both. Furthermore, the artist is the man who creates a symbol of truth. He can think metaphorically, and if the world is an organic structure only a statement with the organic complexity of the work of art can create an adequate symbol of it. And is this not the method of symbolism? In allegory, a symbolic unit preserves its meaning when taken from its context. The Cave of Error *is* the Cave of Error. There is a direct one-to-one relationship between any unit in the world of phenomena and any unit in the world of ideas. But in symbolism, a symbolic unit has power only because of its relationships to everything else in the work of art. Ahab has symbolical value because of the whale, and the whale because of Ahab. In symbolism the interrelationships of the symbolic units involved are equated with the interrelationships of a group of concepts. Let a series of 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., stand for a series of ideas in the mind, and a similar series of a, b, c, d, etc., stand for a series of things in the real world or in the world of the concretizing imagination. Now in allegory, if "a" is a symbolic unit, it stands for "1," "b" for "2," and so on. Thus the Dragon in the *Faerie Queene*, Canto i of Book I, stands for Error, whether the Red Cross Knight is there or not, and the Knight, on one level of interpretation, stands for Holiness, whether the Dragon is there or not. But in symbolism, "a" or "b" or "c" has no direct

⁷ I am alarmed at finding myself in disagreement with Lovejoy. Although I think his three ideas are not heterogeneous, but homogeneous or at least derived from a common root-metaphor, the possibility that they really *are* heterogeneous does not deprive them in the least of their value in understanding romanticism, nor does their possible heterogeneity have any effect on my proposal which follows.

relation to "1" or "2" or "3". Rather, the interrelationships among the first three have symbolic reference to the interrelationships among the second group of three. Moby Dick has symbolic power only because Ahab is hunting him; in fact, he has symbolic power only because almost everything else in the book has symbolic power as well.

The now current though probably not widely accepted critical principle that a symbolic system is capable of an indefinite number of equally valid interpretations is itself a romantic idea, in the sense that the work of art has no fixed or static meaning but changes with the observer in a relationship between the two which is both dialectical, or dynamic, and organic.

Thus we may conclude that Wellek's three criteria—organicism, imagination, and symbolism—are all three derivable from the basic metaphor or concept of dynamic organicism.

There is yet another profoundly important idea which I have not so far mentioned, the idea of the unconscious mind, which appears in Wordsworth, in Coleridge, in Carlyle, and indeed all over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1830 in his magnificent essay, "Characteristics," Carlyle says that the two big ideas of the century are dynamism and the unconscious mind. The idea of the unconscious mind goes back to Hartley, to Kant, to Leibniz, and is implicit in Locke. Indeed it goes back to any poet who seriously talks about a muse. But it appears only in full force with the appearance of dynamic organicism. Best known to the English romantics in the mechanistic associationism of Hartley, it became a central part of their thought when they made the mind radically creative. Heretofore the divine had communicated with man either directly through revelation or indirectly through the evidence of his perfect universe. But with God creating himself, with an imperfect but growing universe, with the constant intrusion of novelty into the world, how can there be any apprehension of truth? If reason is inadequate—because it is fixed and because historically it has failed—the truth can only be apprehended intuitively, imaginatively, spontaneously, with the whole personality, from the deep sources of the fountains that are within. The unconscious is really a postulate to the creative imagination, and as such continues today without the divine sanction as part of present-day critical theory. It is that part of the mind through which novelty enters into the personality and hence into the world in the form of art and ideas. We today conceive of the unconscious spatially as inside and beneath; the earlier romantics conceived of it as outside and above. We descend into the imagination; they rose into it. The last method, of course, is the method of transcendentalism.

Furthermore, as I shall shortly show, not only was the unconscious

taken over from Locke and Kant and Hartley and converted into something radically creative, it also became an integral part of dynamic organicism because a number of the early romantics proved it, as it were, empirically, by their own personal experience. It became to them proof of the validity of the new way of thinking. Hence also Romantic subjectivism, the artist watching his powers develop and novelty emerging from his unconscious mind.

What then is Romanticism? Whether philosophic, theologic, or aesthetic, it is the revolution in the European mind against thinking in terms of static mechanism and the redirection of the mind to thinking in terms of dynamic organicism. Its values are change, imperfection, growth, diversity, the creative imagination, the unconscious.

III

Perhaps the result of my remarks so far is to make a much larger group of determined skeptics on the subject of romanticism. The proof of the Martini is in the drinking, and in the rest of what I have to say I hope to show not only that a group of literary works can be related in terms of the ideas I have given but also that particular literary works can be genuinely illuminated by these ideas, can be given richer content, can be more readily understood. And in addition I wish also to advance one more concept, the only one indeed to which I lay any claim of originality, for what I have already said is only an attempt to reconcile various ideas about romanticism which seemed to be fairly close together and to develop them into some consistent whole, on the basis of Lovejoy's statement that the coming of romanticism marked a great turn in the direction of European thought. For instance, Barzun's "desire and expectation of change" is an important part of my proposal; Stallknecht's "sentiment of being," i.e., of a living universe, is right at the heart of it; Harrold's ideas of growth are equally central.⁸ Nevertheless, the theory is still incomplete.

Dynamic organicism, manifested in literature in its fully developed form with all its main derivative ideas I have called "radical romanticism." To this term I should now like to add "positive romanticism," as a term useful in describing men and ideas and works of art in which dynamic organicism appears, whether it be incomplete or fully developed. But by itself, "positive romanticism" for the purposes of understanding the romantic movement is not only frequently useless;

⁸ An extremely interesting parallel, although later in time than the period I am immediately concerned with, is Wiener's demonstration that American pragmatism came out of the union of Mill's diversitarian and dynamic dialectic with Darwin's theory of evolution. See Philip P. Wiener, *Evolution and the Founders of Pragmatism* (Cambridge, U. S., 1949).

it is often worse than useless. It is often harmful. If some of my readers have been muttering, "What about Byron?" they are quite right in doing so. Positive romanticism cannot explain Byron; positive romanticism is not enough. To it must be added the term "negative romanticism," and to that I now turn.⁹

It may at first seem that I am here denying my basic aim of reducing the multiplicity of theories of romanticism to a single theory, but this is not really so. Negative romanticism is a necessary complement to positive romanticism, not a parallel or alternative to it, with which it must be reconciled. Briefly, negative romanticism is the expression of the attitudes, the feelings, and the ideas of a man who has left static mechanism but has not yet arrived at a reintegration of his thought and art in terms of dynamic organicism. I am here, of course, using a method of analysis which is now so common that one inhales it with the dust of our libraries, the method of analyzing the works of a man in terms of his personal development. Before we study any artist, we begin by establishing his canon and chronology. We *begin*, that is, by *assuming* that there is a development in his art. I hope I am not being merely tedious in pointing out that this method is in itself a particular application of one of the main ideas derived from dynamic organicism, or positive romanticism—the idea of evolution in the nineteenth-century sense. But to show what I mean by negative romanticism, therefore, and how it fits in with positive romanticism, and to show how the theory works in practice, I shall discuss very briefly three works from the earlier years of the Romantic Movement: *The Ancient Mariner*, *The Prelude*, and *Sartor Resartus*.¹⁰

⁹ Wellek, for instance, says that Byron "does not share the romantic conception of imagination," or does so "only fitfully." He quotes *Childe Harold*, Canto III, written and published in 1816, when Byron was temporarily under Wordsworth's influence through Shelley. Byron's romantic view of nature as an organism with which man is unified organically by the imagination is equally fitful and limited to the period of Shelleyan influence. Wellek's suggestion that Byron is a symbolist, depending as it does on Wilson Knight's *The Burning Oracle*, is not very convincing. Knight strikes me as a weak reed to lean upon, and Wellek himself calls Knight "extravagant," certainly an understatement. In short, I think Wellek's three categories of romanticism are useless, or only very rarely useful, when they are applied to Byron. So are Lovejoy's three romantic ideas; for the same reasons, of course. (See Wellek's second article, *CL*, I, 165 and 168.) To be sure, Byron uses symbols; but he uses them compulsively, as everyone else does, not as a conscious principle of literary organization and creation.

¹⁰ In what follows I shall offer an interpretation of *The Ancient Mariner* which I worked out some years ago, but which is substantially that developed from different points of view by Stallknecht, Maud Bodkin, and various other critics. I shall also suggest that all three works are about the same subjective experience. Stallknecht, so far as I know, is the only commentator who has pointed out—in his *Strange Seas of Thought*—that *The Prelude* and *The Ancient Mariner* are about the same thing; and so far as I know, no one has suggested that *Sartor Resartus* is concerned with the same subject.

Briefly, all three works are about spiritual death and rebirth, or secular conversion. In its baldest form, such an experience amounts to this: A man moves from a trust in the universe to a period of doubt and despair of any meaning in the universe, and then to a re-affirmation of faith in cosmic meaning and goodness, or at least meaning. The transition from the first stage to the second, we may call spiritual death; that from the second to the third, we may call spiritual rebirth.

Let us first consider *The Prelude*. The subtitle, not Wordsworth's, is *The Growth of a Poet's Mind*. After Wordsworth had started *The Recluse*, he found that in order to explain his ideas he must first explain how he came to have them. This decision is in itself a sign of positive romanticism. If you think in static terms, you will, as Pope did in *The Essay on Man*, present the result of a process of thought and experience. But if you find that you cannot explain your ideas except in terms of the process of how you have arrived at them, your mind is working in a different way, according to the principles of development and growth. The central experience which Wordsworth describes is spiritual death and rebirth. He began by having a complete faith in the principles of the French Revolution as the deistic *philosophes* and constitutionalists explained it. Their basic political principle was that we have only to restore to man his originally pure but now corrupt political organization and social contract, and a perfect society will necessarily result. Wordsworth accepted this as he also accepted the sentimentality, most notably and fully expressed by Shaftesbury, which was the eighteenth-century emotional expression of faith in the perfection and goodness of the universe, a sentimentalism which became more strident and absurd as its basic theodicy became increasingly less acceptable. Any man who is defending an idea in which he is emotionally involved, will become more emotional and passionate in its defense as his opponent shows with increasing clarity that the idea is untenable.

The French Revolution, to Wordsworth, failed. It made men worse instead of better, and from the creation of political and intellectual freedom it turned to tyranny, slaughter, and imperialist expansion. He saw that he had been misled by his emotions into too facile an acceptance. It was then that he rejected sentimentalism and brought all values before the bar of reason, so that reason might sit in judgment. But reason also was not enough. The boasted reason of the enlightenment could neither explain the failure of the French Revolution nor provide a means of acceptance. Then occurred his spiritual death. He had invested heavily in emotion and in reason. Each had betrayed him. He was spiritually bankrupt. Where was a means of acceptance? Moving to Racedown, rejoining Dorothy, coming to know Coleridge, and going

to live near him at Nether Stowey, he reorganized all his ideas, with Coleridge's and Dorothy's intellectual and emotional help, and reaffirmed in new terms his faith in the goodness and significance of the universe. He stood, he said, "in Nature's presence a sensitive being, a *creative soul*"; that is, his creative power was a "power like one of Nature's." Nature and the creative soul maintain, he believed, an ennobling and enkindling interchange of action. The voice of nature was a living voice. And there are moods when that living voice can be heard, when "We see into the life of things," when we feel "a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused; . . . / A motion and a spirit, that impels / All thinking things, all objects of all thought, / And rolls through all things."

The universe is alive, not dead; living and growing, not a perfect machine; it speaks to us directly through the creative mind and its senses. Its truth cannot be perceived from the "evidences of nature" but only through the unconscious and creative mind. And this is the point of the famous description of the ascent of Mt. Snowdon, in the last book of *The Prelude*. Climbing through the mist, Wordsworth comes to the top of the mountain. Around and below him is a sea of clouds, with the moon shining over all, clear, beautiful, and bright. But through a gap in the clouds comes the roar of the waters in the valleys around the mountains. Thus in the moon he beheld the emblem of a mind "That feeds upon infinity, that broods / Over the dark abyss, intent to hear / Its voices issuing forth to silent light / In one continuous stream." This is his symbol of the unconscious mind, both of man and the universe, ultimately identical, both striving to become as well as to be. He has by a profound experience proved to himself the existence and the trustworthiness and the power of the unconscious mind, of the life of the universe, of the continuous creative activity of the cosmos.

Let me also add that he also, unfortunately I think, retained within his new attitudes a nostalgia for permanence, an ideal of eternal perfection. Thus early do we have the compromise called Victorian. And this inconsistency was to prove his eventual undoing, to cause his loss of creative power, comparatively speaking, and to effect his return to a kind of revised Toryism, to a concept of an organic society without dynamic power. But that is another story and I cannot go into it here.

Leaving chronological order aside, I turn now to *Sartor Resartus*. The central chapters of Carlyle's work are "The Everlasting No," "The Center of Indifference," and "The Everlasting Yea." They obviously present a pattern of spiritual death and rebirth. Carlyle, speaking of himself under the guise of Professor Teufelsdröckh, tells us how he lost his religious belief. "The loss of his religious faith was the loss of every-

thing." "It is all a grim Desert, this once-fair world of his." "Invisible yet impenetrable walls divided me from all living; was there in the wide world, any true bosom I could press trustfully to mine? No, there was none. . . . It was a strange isolation I then lived in. The universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility; it was one huge dead immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb." "The Universe had pealed its Everlasting No authoritatively through all the recesses of his being." But in the moment of Baphometric fire-baptism he stood up and cried out that he would not accept that answer. This was not yet the moment of rebirth, but it was the first step, the step of defiance and rebellion.

There follows the Centre of Indifference, of wandering grimly across the face of Europe, of observing the absurdities and cruelty and wickedness of mankind; he is a wanderer, a pilgrim without any shrine to go to. And then one day, surrounded by a beautiful landscape, in the midst of nature and the tenderness of the natural piety of human beings, came a change. "The heavy dreams rolled gradually away, and I awoke to a new Heaven and a new Earth. . . . What is nature? Ha! Why do I not name thee GOD? Are not thou the 'Living Garment of God'? The universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres, but godlike and my Father's." It is alive. Nature—as he tells us later in the book, in the chapter called "Organic Filaments"—Nature "is not completed, but ever completing. . . . Mankind is a living movement, in progress faster or slower." Here indeed is a positive romanticism so complete that it is almost a radical romanticism, though Carlyle, like Wordsworth, retained an inconsistent static principle in his thought. Like Wordsworth, his nostalgia for a static principle or static ground to the evolving universe was to prove his undoing, but that again is another story.

In *The Ancient Mariner* Coleridge tells us of an experience which is the same as that given by Wordsworth and Carlyle. The mariner, on his journey around the world, or through life, violates the faith of his fellow-man by shooting the albatross, the one thing alive in the world of ice and snow, always symbols of spiritual coldness and death. His fellow mariners reject him, marking him with the sign of his own guilt. From the world of ice and snow they come to the world of fire and heat, again symbols of spiritual death, alienation, and suffering. The soul of the mariner is won by Life-in-Death. He alone remains alive while his fellow sailors, silently and with reproachful eyes, die around him. As Carlyle put it, "it was a strange isolation I lived in then." And Carlyle also uses the symbols of ice and fire to describe his condition. Isolation, alienation, and guilt possess the soul of the mariner. He is alone, in a

burning and evil universe. "The very deep did rot," and the slimy and evil watersnakes surround his ship. And as he watches them in the moonlight he is suddenly taken with their beauty, and "I blessed them unaware." From the depths of the unconscious rose an impulse of affirmation, of love, of acceptance. The albatross drops from his neck into the sea. The symbol of guilt and alienation and despair vanishes. The universe comes alive. It rains, and the rain is the water of life. The wind blows; the breath of a living universe wafts the ship across the ocean. The air is filled with voices and the sky is filled with living light. The spirit of the land of ice and snow comes to his aid. (As Carlyle put it, even in his most despairful moments there was within him, unconsciously, a principle of faith and affirmation.) Angels come into the bodies of the dead sailors and work the ship. The whole universe comes to the mariner's aid, and he completes his journey.

And thereafter, though he has been forgiven and reaccepted into man's life by the act of confession, there comes an impulse to tell his story, the creative impulse of the poet rising powerfully from his unconscious mind. Poetry is conceived of as a compulsive but creative act. In a sense Coleridge is more profound than either Wordsworth or Carlyle. He knows that for a romantic, once alienated means always alienated. He cannot join the wedding feast. Edwin Markham put it well:

He drew a circle that shut me out—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout:
But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in!

Though a man may create a synthesis that includes the ideas of his fellow men, to those very men he will always be outside the circle of accepted beliefs, even though he blesses all things great and small.

At any rate we see here a highly radical positive romanticism. It is the record of a process; it affirms the unconscious mind and the creative imagination; it affirms the principle of the living universe; it affirms diversitarianism; and it is a fully developed symbolism, an organic symbolism in which the shooting of the albatross is without symbolic power unless it is thought of in terms of the power and the interrelations of the various symbolic units.

These interpretations, to me at least, demonstrate the excellence of Lovejoy's three principles of romanticism—organicism, dynamism, and diversitarianism—to get us inside various works of romantic art and to show us the relationships that tie them together into a single literary movement. And again to me, they show that these ideas are not heterogeneous, independent ideas, but closely associated ideas, all related to a central concept or world-metaphor.

And now to define negative romanticism. I have, of course, taken the term from Carlyle's Everlasting No. As various individuals, according to their natures, and their emotional and intellectual depths, went through the transition from affirming the meaning of the cosmos in terms of static mechanism to affirming it in terms of dynamic organicism, they went through a period of doubt, of despair, of religious and social isolation, of the separation of reason and creative power. It was a period during which they saw neither beauty nor goodness in the universe, nor any significance, nor any rationality, nor indeed any order at all, not even an evil order. This is negative romanticism, the preliminary to positive romanticism, the period of *Sturm und Drang*. As the nineteenth century rolled on, the transition became much easier, for the new ideas were much more widely available. But for the early romantics the new ideas had to be learned through personal and painful experience. The typical symbols of negative romanticism are individuals who are filled with guilt, despair, and cosmic and social alienation. They are often presented, for instance, as having committed some horrible and unmentionable and unmentioned crime in the past. They are often outcasts from men and God, and they are almost always wanderers over the face of the earth. They are Harolds, they are Manfreds, they are Cains. They are heroes of such poems as *Alastor*. But when they begin to get a little more insight into their position, as they are forced to develop historical consciousness, as they begin to seek the sources for their negation and guilt and alienation, they become Don Juans. That is, in *Don Juan*, Byron sought objectivity by means of satire, and set out to trace in his poem the development of those attitudes that had resulted in himself. As I said earlier, positive romanticism cannot explain Byron, but negative romanticism can. Byron spent his life in the situation of Wordsworth after the rejection of Godwin and before his move to Racedown and Nether Stowey, of the Mariner alone on the wide, wide sea, of Teufelsdröckh subject to the Everlasting No and wandering through the Centre of Indifference.

It is the lack of this concept that involves Wellek's second article and much of Barzun's book, for all their admirable insights, in certain difficulties, in such a foredoomed attempt to find in figures who express negative romanticism and figures who express positive romanticism a common and unifying element.¹¹ Theirs is the same difficulty as that with which Auden gets involved in *The Enchafed Flood*. It is true that both positive and negative romanticism often cause isolation of the personality, but as Coleridge of these three men alone realized, negative

¹¹ See, for example, n. 9, above.

romanticism causes isolation and despair because it offers no cosmic explanations, while positive romanticism offers cosmic explanations which are not shared by the society of which one is a part. To Arnold, "Not a having and a resting, but a growing and a becoming, is the character of perfection as culture conceives it." His ideas isolated him from Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace; they were impressed but they did not follow; for they could not comprehend, so far were his fundamental attitudes separated from theirs. Picasso has in his painting expressed profoundly the results of the freedom that romanticism has given to the creative imagination, but he is detested by most people who have seen his cubist or post-cubist paintings—as well as by a great many who have not. He is at home in the universe, but not in his society.¹²

¹² This is perhaps the place to insert a word about pre-romanticism, a term which I would wholly abandon. Apparently it arose in the first place from a naive application of Darwinian evolution to literary history. If the great romantics liked nature, any eighteenth-century enjoyment or praise of nature became pre-romanticism, in spite of the Horatian tradition of neo-classicism. If the romanticists liked emotion, any praise of emotion in the eighteenth century was pre-romantic, as if any age, including "The Age of Reason," could be without emotional expression. In their youth Wordsworth and Coleridge were sentimentalists; therefore sentimentalism is romantic. And so on. James R. Foster, in his recent *History of the Pre-Romantic Novel in England* (New York: MLA, 1949), has shown that sensibility was the emotional expression of Deism, just as Lovejoy has demonstrated in various books and articles that Deism and Neo-Classicism were parallel. If it seems odd that sentimentalism, "cosmic Toryism," and Deism are all expressions of the same basic attitudes, it must be remembered that the eighteenth century was the period when the mechanistic and static theodicy broke down from its own inconsistencies. Romanticism did not destroy its predecessor. It came into existence to fill a void. As an example of the difficulties eighteenth-century figures experienced in trying to hold their world together, consider the problem of understanding how Pope's *Essay on Man* could possibly be the foundation for his satires. Yet he was working on both at the same time and apparently thought the *Essay* gave him exactly the foundation and justification for satire that he needed. But if whatever is, is right, why is it wrong that there should be such people and such behavior as Pope satirizes in the *Moral Essays*, the imitated and original satires, and *The Dunciad*? It is the old problem of accounting for evil in a world created by a perfect, omnipotent, and benevolent deity. I would recommend the total abandonment of the term "pre-romantic," and the substitution for it of some term such as "neo-classic disintegration." For instance, to refer to Wellek once more, on the first page of his second article he has this to say: "There was the 'Storm and Stress' movement in the seventies which exactly parallels what today is elsewhere called 'pre-romanticism.'" In a widely used anthology, *The Literature of England*, by G. B. Woods, H. A. Watt, and G. K. Anderson, first published in 1936, the section called "The Approach to Romanticism" includes Thomson, Gray, Collins, Cowper, Burns, and Blake; and in Ernest Bernbaum's *Guide through the Romantic Movement*, another widely known and used work (I refer to the first edition, published in 1930), the "Pre-Romantic Movement" includes the following, among others: Shaftesbury, Winchelsea, Dyer, Thomson, Richardson, Young, Blair, Akenside, Collins, the Wartons, Hartley, Gray, Goldsmith, MacKenzie, Burns, Darwin, Blake, Godwin, and Radcliffe.

IV

My proposal is now complete. This theory does, I firmly believe, what such a theory must do. It gets us inside of various works of art, and it shows the relevance of one work of art to another. Consider Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. It builds to a triumphant close. Unlike the symphonies of Haydn and most of those of Mozart, its last movement, not its first or second, is the most important and the most fully developed, for it is an affirmation which is the result of a tremendous struggle. Between the third and fourth movements is a bridge passage which repeats the rhythm and the harmonies of the opening theme, and the whole work is developed from germinal themes, ideas from which are derived the themes of subsequent movements. It is a symphony developmental and organic in construction. It is the record of a process, of an experience. It is a symbol of the cosmos conceived of as dynamic organism.

The same insights can be extended to painting, to impressionism, for example, with its evocation and record of a particular moment; or to modern architecture, especially to the work of Wright, with his life-long search for an "organic architecture" of houses that are part of their sites, with living rooms and gardens which interpenetrate. But I cannot here offer a full history of the development of modern culture. Rather, I wish to make one final suggestion, to issue a warning to anyone who may be taken enough with these ideas to try to employ them.

Although negative and then positive romanticism developed by reaction out of the static-mechanistic-uniformitarian complex, with its cosmic Toryism, its sentimentalism, and its Deism, they were also superimposed upon it. At any point in nineteenth or twentieth-century culture it is possible to take a cross-section and find all three actively at work. The past one hundred and fifty years or so must be conceived as a dramatic struggle, sometimes directly between positive romanticism and static, mechanistic thought, sometimes three-cornered. It is a struggle between minds and within minds. It is seen today in the profound disparity between what is sometimes called high art and popular art; it is expressed in the typical modern cultural phenomena of the *avant-garde*, which is as modern as Wordsworth and Coleridge. It appeared in the

Some of these are "Storm and Stress"; others are quite plainly not. To lump all of them together, as a great many teachers and writers do, is to obliterate many highly important distinctions. To my mind, for *some* individuals neo-classicism disintegrated; thereupon what I call "negative romanticism," of which Storm and Stress is a very important expression, for *some* individuals ensued. Then *some* individuals, initially a very few, moved into the attitudes which I call "positive romanticism." As it is now used, "pre-romanticism" confuses the first two of these three stages, just as "romanticism" as it is now generally used confuses the second two and often all three.

struggle over the "packing" of the supreme court, and the wearisome but still vital quarrels about progressive education. It appears in the antagonism between our relativistic critics and our absolutistic critics. It appears in the theological struggle between the theology of such a man as Charles Raven¹³ and the proponents of the "theology of crisis." A very pure positive romanticism is at the heart of Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*; her ideal of a good society is organic, dynamic, and diversitarian. In short, the history of ideas and the arts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is the history of the dramatic struggle among three opposing forces: static mechanism, negative romanticism, and positive romanticism. In this drama, to me the hero is dynamic and diversitarian organicism, and I think Goethe and Beethoven and Coleridge and the other founders of the still vital romantic tradition—a tradition often repudiated by those who are at the very heart of it, and understandably—have still much to say to us, are not mere intellectual and aesthetic curiosities. Nevertheless, I am aware that to many scholars and thinkers, positive romanticism is the villain, responsible for all the ills of our century. The drama may indeed turn out to be a tragedy, but if it does, it is because static mechanism persists in staying alive.¹⁴

Of course the fact that my attitude towards the continuing and future usefulness of positive romanticism may not after all be justified is not essential to my argument, or even germane to it. I ask only that my readers take under serious consideration, and test in their studies, in their reading, and in their classrooms the theories about romanticism which I have outlined. I trust that many of them will find these ideas useful, even though they withhold final assent.

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¹³ Raven is both biologist and theologian. See his *Science, Religion, and the Future* (Cambridge and N. Y., 1943).

¹⁴ The romantic metaphysic does not *necessarily* involve optimism. That is, although the world is growing in a better direction, the sum of evil may still outweigh the sum of good. Nor does it *necessarily* involve progressivism. That is, the development from the simple to the complex may mean development towards the better, or it may mean development towards the worse, or it may simply mean development without either improvement or degeneration. However, in the early part of the nineteenth century and generally since then, it usually implies both optimism and progressivism. There have been exceptions, however, of whom Eduard von Hartmann is one of the most thoroughgoing, both in his pessimism and in his positive romanticism. It must be noted that he has a technique of acceptance in the sense that he discerns cosmic order and meaning, though he doesn't like it.